



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

IAN A. BOWLES
SECRETARY OF ENERGY
AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

ONE SOUTH STATION
BOSTON, MA 02110
(617) 305-3500

PAUL J. HIBBARD
CHAIRMAN

W. ROBERT KEATING
COMMISSIONER

TIM WOOLF
COMMISSIONER

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Contact:

Robert Keough (617) 626-1109

robert.keough@state.ma.us

Catherine Williams (617) 626-1809

catherine.williams@state.ma.us

Department of Public Utilities Opens Investigation of Utilities' Response to December 12 Ice Storm

*Department initiates probe in response to Governor Patrick's request;
schedules first public hearing in Fitchburg on January 27*

BOSTON – The Department of Public Utilities (DPU) today opened an investigation into efforts by the state's electric utilities to prepare for and restore power following the December 12, 2008, ice storm. The DPU will review how the state's four electric utilities prepared for the storm, and their implementation of emergency storm plans.

Governor Deval Patrick last month called for the DPU to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the utility companies' response to the storm, which left some utility customers without power for nearly two weeks.

"We are going to focus on every aspect of the companies' performance" said DPU Chairman Paul Hibbard. "Our investigation will examine each company's storm response and emergency restoration plans, including their preparation for and management of restoration efforts, inter-company cooperation such as the sharing of response crews, the procurement and allocation of out-of-state mutual aid crews, communications with state and local public safety officials, and dissemination of information to the public."

The DPU directed each electric company to file by February 23 reports detailing the following:

- restoration plans and assessments of performance;
- determination of crew needs and allocation of company crews, contractor crews, mutual aid crews, and tree crews;
- damage assessments;
- descriptions of outage tracking and field dispatch coordination;
- prioritization of outage repairs;
- call center operations during the storm;
- descriptions of communications with municipal officials and agencies;

FAX: (617) 345-9101 TTY: (800) 323-3298

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- descriptions of communications with customers during outages;
- descriptions of vegetation management procedures;
- discussions of power grid reliability standards issues;
- identification of company practices that require improvement, and proposed modifications.

The DPU will make these reports available to the public on the DPU website as soon as practicable after filing at www.mass.gov/dpu.

To provide an opportunity for public participation and comment, the DPU will hold a public hearing within the service territory of each electric company and is also accepting written comments. The first public hearing will be held at 4 p.m. Tuesday, January 27, at Memorial Middle School, 615 Rollstone Street, Fitchburg. The Department also plans to hold a hearing in Lunenburg – details to be announced – and additional hearings for other service areas across the state. Times and locations of all hearings will be posted at www.mass.gov/dpu. The DPU will also issue a procedural notice for the filing of public comments.

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